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**METACOGNITION IN IDR: FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS' USE OF
ACTIVE READING STRATEGIES DURING INDEPENDENT DAILY
READING TIME**

By

Stephanie M. Bradfield

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of
Master of Arts in Reading Education

At
Rowan University
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Thesis Chair: Stephanie Abraham

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my incredibly supportive family.

To my amazing husband, who has done anything and everything that I have needed. From pitching in extra around the house to forcing me to take a night off when he could tell I needed it, he always knows how to help. I am such a lucky woman to have you as my best friend and partner in this crazy journey of life.

To my perfect parents, who have provided the love and support that has led me to be the unrelenting person that I am today. They have taught me that hard work pays off and that sometimes you just have to push through challenges that seem to be insurmountable, making your success even sweeter.

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I am very blessed to have spent the duration of my career thus far at such a supportive school. Both my principal and my colleagues have been so encouraging during this process.

I am so thankful to have completed this program with a great group of people, and with the support of some wonderful professors. The knowledge and experience that I have gained throughout this journey will stay with me for the rest of my life. I am forever a better teacher and learner because of this program.

Abstract

Stephanie M. Bradfield

METACOGNITION IN IDR: FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS' USE OF ACTIVE
READING STRATEGIES DURING INDEPENDENT DAILY READING TIME
2017-2018

Dr. Stephanie Abraham
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study is to determine how fourth grade students implement active reading strategies during independent reading time. Data was recorded over a one-month period and tracked through student response journals, individual reading conferences, and teacher anecdotal notes. Throughout the study, student responses developed to include discussion of strategy use and metacognition. Student stamina and comprehension was supported through the practice. The structure of the independent practice helped students' to build their skills of strategy implementation and metacognition to monitor their independent reading.

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Chapter I

Introduction

“A writer only begins a book. A reader finishes it.”

-Samuel Johnson

I myself am an avid reader and truly enjoy reading any chance I get. It is always a priority to me to instill this deep-rooted love of literacy to my students. One main facet of my teaching philosophy is to be a life-long learner. I have been described as being someone who is “addicted to school,” and definitely consider that to be a compliment. Through my career as a student, I have taken notice to the fact that the level of my own optimism for a topic was in some ways directly correlated to the passion exhibited by each teacher. I have always felt a true connection for literacy and now love to bring my passion for it to my teaching, hopefully igniting the same feeling in each of my students.

I have always struggled knowing that some of my students enter my classroom with strong negative feelings towards reading. I know that through the practice of active reading students can have more positive experiences with books, and I teach these strategies for this purpose (Reuss, 2002). However, I am always left wondering if my students are truly applying the very active reading strategies that lead to these positive outcomes. There is no feeling during teaching that compares to witnessing an “Ah-ha” moment for a student. Seeing the interest in reading for enjoyment ignite in a student, and watching them develop an awareness of their ability to grow and learn, is one of the many gratifying moments in this profession. My research question was not so much of an ah-ha moment as it has been a growing

wonder through my career, always being left simply hoping that my students are using these strategies during independent practice. As my school district has aimed to add more monitoring strategies into our independent reading program, I was left wondering if it was truly the best practice to ensure student interest and engagement.

As many of these described “Ah-ha” moments have taken place in my classroom, I have always wondered how many more are occurring that are not vocalized, or occur at some other time than during direct instruction or guided practice activities. I know that I can monitor my students for this understanding throughout a structured lesson, but have always questioned whether they can really implement the skills that are taught completely independently. I did not want to attach too many school-like activities to daily independent reading time, for fear that it would take away from the targeted joy of simply reading (Parr & Maguiness, 2005). Yet, I have wondered how I could ever answer this burning question: Are students able to independently apply the active reading strategies that I spend so much time teaching?

With the opportunity for this project came my answer. I already knew that each reader has a different reading experience based on his or her own schema and knowledge base. However, I realized that through closely monitoring my students’ independent reading habits and reactions, I could determine if my active reading strategy instruction was being successfully carried into independent practice. I knew that throughout my study I would have to monitor my students closely while still maintaining that essential level of independence that goes along with independent daily reading time. I was most curious to see if the skills were used and if the students

were able to realize, or be cognizant, that their use of active reading strategies aided their reading comprehension.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to determine how fourth grade students implement active reading strategies during independent reading time. This study is significant as there is a current push in my school district to implement a structured independent reading period. In almost every upper elementary school classroom, there is some amount of class time that is dedicated daily to practicing independent reading. For children to become truly proficient with a skill, they must be able to implement it in a meaningful way without assistance or guidance. Upon reviewing existing literature on independent reading practices, I found that a large portion of the work focused on motivation and choice. In addition, the literature available on the topic of strategy development focuses on direct instruction techniques and conferring with students to ensure strategy implementation. The findings of these articles were able to prove student development through instructional techniques such as teacher modeling and guided practice (Guppy, 1999; Hall, 2014). Other studies were able to show that conferencing with students about their reading was one effective way to ensure strategy use (Davis, 2010; Siah and Kwok, 2010). After my research, I have a good understanding of the important aspects of independent reading. During my own research, I will incorporate the practice of conferring, and allow choice to ensure motivation and engagement. It has been clear that student self selected texts are important for the data collection of conferences and response journal entries to be meaningful for my students.

Many teachers implement this activity in differing ways with varying levels of student monitoring. The National Reading Panel's (2000) critique of Silent Sustained Reading proved that some kind of student monitoring is crucial in order for this practice to be successful. Students must be allowed to choose their own books and have the time to read them, but they must also be held accountable in some capacity for the decisions they have made (Johnson, 2003). Monitoring techniques such as book logs, reading response journals, and reading conferences are all viable options for classroom teachers. A qualitative study based on student surveys (Kasten & Wilfong, 2007) looked at habit of young independent readers. It was noted that the best way to both monitor and engage students was through conferring. Studies indicate that the practice of conferring is more effective for student engagement than school-like logs and journal prompts (Parr & Maguiness, 2005). The framework known as Independent Daily Reading includes such practices for student engagement. When discussing IDR, Allington and Gabriel (2012) discussed the importance for students to talk about their reading and writing, claiming it is perhaps one of the most underused, yet easy to implement, elements of instruction. With one-on-one instructional time being so rare in mainstream reading classrooms, these reading conferences about independent reading practices become especially important. Student engagement is necessary for independent practice of any form to be effective. A teacher must understand that their students' reading needs are unique. Even during a routine such as IDR, a teacher must ensure that these needs are being met. According to Kuhn et al. (2006), it is not just the time spent with a book in hand, but rather the intensity and volume of the reading that determines a student's progress.

IDR is the time for teachers to ensure each student is taking part in critical literacy skill development.

A major factor impacting students' reading comprehension is their ability to use a variety of active reading strategies. The actual process of reading and understanding text has been increasingly intriguing to researchers and theorists over the past number of decades. It is now more understood than ever how intricate the process of reading is, and how it is indeed the culmination of a variety of processes working together. According to Ness (2011), even with such a large body of knowledge and research that showcases effective comprehension strategies, students in the elementary grades miss out on such instruction too often. Overall, the literature shows that modeling and independent practice were the areas most lacking in programs (Joseph, 2016; McKeown, 2009; Ness, 2011). Through the use of teacher-monitored independent daily reading, students at all ability levels can practice and deepen their understanding of active reading strategies. Through guided and independent practice, students can become more capable of applying active reading strategies. Students who are exposed to this type of instruction and practice can then achieve metacognition of their use of these strategies and even reflect on how they aid in the process of reading.

Research exists showing the importance of both independent reading practice as well as active reading strategy development of students. However, there is a disconnect in the research that connects the ideas into one of students' strengthening strategy usage through independent daily reading practices. Some argue that independent reading time should be just that (Gambrell, 2011; Krashen, 2011), while

other researchers feel that monitored reading and conferring yields the best results when it comes to this instructional practice (Krashen/Gambrell, 2011). The research that I have conducted will help educators to see how this routine can be an effective addition to their classroom practice.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The purpose of this study is to observe individual students ability to use learned active reading strategies during independent reading. During direct instruction, elementary teachers spend a significant amount of time teaching strategy usage. It is crucial that students are able to begin to implement these strategies independently by upper elementary grades in order to continue to progress as readers. The specific research question being asked is: How do students use active reading strategies during independent reading time? The sub question is: How do active reading strategies impact student comprehension and stamina?

Story of the Question

As a fourth grade teacher, reading instruction is a primary focus each and every day for my students. Students tend to enter fourth grade with an idea if they like or do not like reading. I find a major goal each year to be to create life-long readers. I always make sure to do my best to exude my passion for reading and learning. I am always concerned with giving my students the best tools for them to continue to enjoy reading. Reading for leisure is so very important in the development of children. It always pains my heart to have a discussion with a student who claims to “hate reading.” I always make sure to ask for an explanation of such a strong negative feeling. A majority of the time, students’ feelings stem from an impression

that they are not good enough or incapable of reading well. I try to ensure that all students gain positive and enjoyable experiences with reading throughout the year in order to boost confidence and begin to change their feelings.

I know that through increased active reading, students are more capable of engaging with a story in a deep and meaningful way. I love to connect with my students over the books they have read and enjoyed. During reading conferences, I often ask students how they feel about themselves as a reader. One of my proudest moments was at the end of last school year, when a little boy Wyatt confided, “You are the reason I read now!” At the beginning of the school year, Wyatt was a student who would employ any avoidance technique possible in order to get out of reading class. During independent reading time, I would often catch him staring out our classroom window, switching seats, or trying to spark up a conversation with a classmate. Throughout the year, Wyatt discussed his unwillingness to read with me during our conferences. I made every attempt to find books that would appeal to his interests and work with him to develop his fluency and comprehension. Wyatt was reading on grade level, but did not seem to be engaging with any stories on a personal level. Finally, I introduced him to a book written by Mike Lupica, *Shoot Out-Comeback Kids*. It was like a light bulb went off inside of Wyatt. All of the sudden, he was reading and responding to the story, even discussing his personal connections to the characters. During a reading conference, Wyatt explained to me, “I always am at soccer, but I get so tired. Reading this book is just as exciting as a game, but it is also relaxing at the same time.” It turns out that with three brothers who are all involved in sports, Wyatt’s family did not have much down time. He always pushed

reading off because he saw it as another chore. Once he was able to actively engage with a book and understand that those strategies led him to enjoy the story, he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. All reluctant readers may just need a similar experience in order to ignite their love of reading (Reuss, 2002).

My main concern for this research is how I can be sure students are in fact able to apply these strategies that I focus so much on while they are reading independently for enjoyment. I want to determine if and how students transfer the active reading strategies that we cover during lessons into their independent reading time.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two of this paper provides a review of the literature regarding the purpose of independent daily reading as well as active reading strategy development in students. The two topics are linked together as ways to develop students' metacognition in literacy. Chapter three describes the context of the study, detailing the specific school and classroom environments as well as the students of focus. This chapter also provides the methodology and data collection plan as well. Chapter four provides data and analysis. Specific findings of the study are discussed. Chapter five presents the conclusions of the study and suggests implications for teaching and learning. Suggestions for further research regarding student use of active reading strategies during independent reading time are also discussed.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

“One of the essential roles of a teacher is to help connect students with books,”

(Mitchell, 2016, p. 67).

The practice of independent silent reading has been a controversial topic in education for many years. It has primarily been accepted as a valuable practice until the National Reading Panel released its findings in 2000, reporting the lack of research that supported the effectiveness of it as an instructional practice. However, many studies exist which prove the success of such a learning activity (Gambrell, 2011; Krashen, 2011). Presently, it remains a topic that is heavily discussed and researched. Still, it is difficult to conclusively determine what exactly leads to a successful independent reading program. The implementation of independent daily reading within the classroom has been a trend in recent years. Sustained Silent Reading is one way for teachers to do a better job of including students' interests into literacy lessons. It is also important for teachers to use out of school practices to reinforce the creation of these positive reading habits. There are many widely used models that refer to this practice, such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), DEAR Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and Independent Daily Reading (IDR). No matter what it is titled in each classroom, all teachers seem to offer their own specific variation. When reviewing the multitude of differing studies, all focusing on the countless components of independent reading, some clear trends emerged. Student success during independent reading is directly correlated to choice, variety, and guided book choice.

In addition to providing the time for students to complete independent practice, active reading strategies must be explicitly taught and monitored throughout instruction. Comprehension strategies must be taught through explicit instruction prior to implementation of independent reading activities. In addition, the classroom teacher must allocate ample time for both guided and independent practice in order to ensure student proficiency. Finally, students must be monitored for engagement and understanding continuously and on a regular basis during independent reading time. The research (Krashen, 2016) has decidedly shown that if these three factors are incorporated into an independent reading program, students can make growth as autonomous readers through the practice. Chapter two discusses a review of literature about independent reading models and active reading development of students. The first section provides an overview of the differing models of independent reading practice as well as the best-supported components of these models. Next, the role of the teacher within strategy instruction and development is examined. Finally, the importance of conferring and the benefits of student monitoring and accountability is discussed.

Independent Daily Reading: How and Why?

The idea of independent reading as an in-school practice began in the 1970s. Hunt (1971) developed the program and later within the same year McCracken (1971) perfected it for the purpose of having students participate in such reading during leisure time in school (Grubaugh, 1986, p. 169). There has been a multitude of research on this instructional practice with the intent to strengthen the framework. Two of the most commonly used terms are Independent Daily Reading (IDR) and

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). IDR is when students read texts of their choosing on their own with minimal assistance from a teacher. During IDR, a teacher confers with students about their reading and assists with choosing books, decoding, or implementing comprehension strategies based on the individual needs of the students. This is not to be confused with the common practice of SSR that is implemented in many schools. SSR is a term that covers a whole class designating a set time, in order to silently read, with the teacher also silently reading as well. The effectiveness of this practice has been well researched and documented through many qualitative studies (Manning & Manning, 1984; Yoon, 2002). Yoon (2002) encouraged teachers to implement SSR, as the time spent reading builds personality and schema in students. Krashen (2011) suggested SSR empowers and motivates students to become stronger readers.

SSR has been widely practiced yet also frequently critiqued for the lack of teachers' teaching, monitoring, interacting with, and holding students accountable for their time spent reading (Reutzel et al., 2008). Essentially, it is simply not enough to have students read (Joseph, 2016; McKeown, 2009). In turn, the National Reading Panel (2000) report claimed that there was not enough evidence to support that SSR increased reading affects students' reading ability due to lack of accountability for what they are reading and how they comprehend while reading are crucial for success. For instance, students can sit and look like they are reading for twenty minutes each and every day, and without some type of monitoring, it can be a complete waste of instructional time (Gambrell, 2007). Because of this criticism, studies (Kolic-Vehovec, 2016) have been designed to demonstrate the importance of

conferring and modeling. It has been found that the most resistant and struggling readers are the hardest to get engaged during independent reading time (Kasten, 2007).

In response to this critique, Marinak and Gambrell (2006) have promoted an IDR time that is designed to provide the independent practice, yet still monitor student's performance and intervene with individualized strategies for all students. Teachers must base their classroom pedagogy on the relevant research. For instance, Manning and Manning (1984) found that supplementing reading time with discussion is better for students' strategy development than only SSR.

The importance of choice and motivation. According to Johnson (2003), students must be allowed to choose their own books and have the time to read them, but they must also be held accountable in some capacity for the decisions they have made. Individual conferences are a non-negotiable when it comes to implementing a successful silent reading routine. According to the research, fluid and natural discussion of a child's reading versus literal question answering is more productive. One of the most important instructional practices is also one of the most underused, easy to implement strategies. This is for students to talk about their reading and writing (Allington & Gabriel, 2012). In upper elementary classrooms, it is rare for students to get one-on-one reading instruction for any extended period of time (Allington & Gabriel, 2012). Most widely used curricula programs hinge on whole group, small group, and independent frameworks. This is when reading interviews or conferences become especially important. This teaching strategy is a great way to incorporate added individualized instruction for each student

Even with the added support student and teacher conferencing during IDR, it is sometimes a problematic activity. Teacher researcher, Richard Allington (2006), summed up this phenomenon so nicely: “If we could just get children to read, the simple act of reading would nurture proficiency in reading” (p.10). The most problematic part for teachers is pairing the motivation and knowledge together within each student to form an avid, competent reader. Choice and variety are crucial when it comes to implementing a successful independent reading program in a classroom. Students are inclined to read and understand more, and are more likely to continue reading when they have the opportunities to choose what they read (Allington & Gabriel, 2012). Furthermore, it seems that while students may need guidance in choosing appropriate books for their ability levels, students are more apt to read when they choose the material themselves (Krashen, 2011). The use of self-selected texts seems to improve both engagement and comprehension.

While it is important for students to have access to texts that is written on their independent level, it is also imperative that a student is never told that he or she cannot read something. Student choice is important during independent reading as it helps the students stay motivated and engaged (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). During independent reading practice, it should always be acceptable for a student to be reading a book that may be below or above their level, for the sake of independent reading. A main goal of this practice is to foster and appreciation and love for the joy of reading. Denying students an enjoyable reading experience because of specific reading levels is undermining that goal. This makes it crucial for teacher’s to provide

their students with a wide variety of texts that are on a range of levels, genres, and topics (Johnson, 2003).

Increasing availability of texts. In today's technological world, it is even possible for teachers to tap into digital library resources. Technology is changing at a pace so rapid it can be difficult for teachers to stay in the know. Teachers must explore the ways that these devices can heighten the independent reading experience for students. By doing so, students can gain reading competence in conjunction with necessary 21st century skills (Mitchell, 2016). In her study, Mitchell (2016) used Nooks to increase the engagement of sixth graders during independent reading time. The use of digital resources such as news websites that are geared towards students can be a way to introduce 21st century independent reading to students. Teachers must utilize all resources possible in order to provide each student with a positive independent reading experience.

To further ensure that they are providing choice and variety of texts to students, teachers must keep classroom libraries up to date so that there are a multitude of book choices for students that are both accessible and interesting. Students should never be discouraged from reading that is either above or below their independent reading level, just for sheer enjoyment. Covering and modeling choosing books that are just right for them should be covered in the first days of a new school year and reinforced during individual student reading conferences frequently.

Active Reading Strategy Development

The actual process of reading and understanding text has been increasingly intriguing to researchers and theorists over the past number of decades. It is now

more understood than ever how intricate the process is and how it is the culmination of a variety of processes working together. Even with a body of knowledge highlighting effective comprehension strategies, too often our students in the elementary grades miss out on such important and effective instruction (Ness, 2011). In her qualitative study of teacher practice, Ness (2011) looked for most often missed opportunities for instruction in the reading classroom. She found that in many programs, the aspect of modeling strategy usage is completely skipped (Ness, 2011). In many instances it is taken for granted that students decoding is directly linked to comprehension, and this is not always the case. A student may learn to read fluently, but explicit instruction is necessary in order to develop active reading comprehension as well. It should be discernible that the actual practice of reading would naturally aid to becoming a better reader, enhancing reading skills and therefore fluency and comprehension. Allington and Gabriel (2012) found that the time students spend actually reading during an ELA class is of great importance. During the study, the students of the most effective teachers' spent a significant amount of time reading. While in less-effective classrooms, students spent time on activities such as worksheets, question and answer sessions targeting low-level literal comprehension, and before or after reading activities. While it is important to focus ample time on the act of reading, teachers cannot assume that students come to them in an upper elementary classroom with sufficient strategy knowledge to effectively read independently. The beginning of the year should include a series of lessons that target each active reading strategy that the class will be expected to utilize during IDR. Ness (2011) also found that researchers observed highly effective teachers including

reading comprehension instruction during all components of an ELA lesson.

Additionally, these teachers provided reading comprehension instruction when using a large variety of text types. This research proves that it is possible and important to provide explicit instruction during all portions of an ELA class. These strategies can be covered, and then students will be monitored for their continuous use during independent reading time throughout the school year.

It is known that proficient readers are able to use a variety of reading strategies to comprehend a given text. In a qualitative study that explored self-questioning (Joseph et al., 2015), findings generally indicated that students who used self-questioning strategies improved on their reading comprehension performance over and above either control conditions or control groups. Through the use of teacher-monitored independent daily reading, students at all ability levels can practice and deepen their understanding of these strategies. Through guided and independent practice, students can become more capable of applying active reading strategies. Students who are exposed to this type of instruction and practice can then achieve metacognition of their use of these strategies and even reflect on how they aid the process of reading. In another qualitative study, researchers confirmed that comprehension monitoring is important for the regulation of reading that is manifested in the way how readers plan, monitor, evaluate, and use information available to them as they make sense of what they read (Kolic-Vehovec, 2016). However, it remains imperative that strategy usage be explicitly taught through direct instruction and repeated modeling from the teacher. This instruction can only then be supported by the use of independent daily reading (Alharbi, 2015). It is not enough

for students to be taught these strategies once. A teacher must monitor the development and use of the variety and complexity of individual students. Although these results are largely encouraging, it is difficult to truly assess how much reading comprehension instruction is truly enough to produce student gains and metacognitive readers (Ness, 2011). Therefore, the monitoring of students with conferencing during independent reading time can provide insight into the progression of strategy usage in students.

Conferring to Monitor Strategy Use During IDR

Reading conferences are an important practice for independent reading as well as strategy development. When a child's cueing strategies are well established, and assisted reading sessions are no longer required for comprehension, reading interviews provide continuing opportunity for one on one instruction (Guppy, 1999). Reading conferences can be beneficial for a teacher to identify the necessary next steps to promote growth of students as readers. Teacher and student discussions can lead to findings about an individual reader's needs or maybe even reveal a trend from the needs of an entire class. By noting the types of strategies students are using to self-correct their reading, teachers can gain a sense of students' progress and choose strategies for additional lessons that will help them focus on understanding meaning as the goal of reading (Pratt & Urbanowski, 2015). The sheer presence and observation of the teacher can cause an increased engagement level for some students (Dickerson, 2015; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006). While some research advises against the use of school-like activities attached to IDR such as book logs and response journals, other studies find that these tools can help guide conferences and

further hold students accountable for their own self-monitoring (Goldberg & Serravallo, 2007). In addition to teacher conferences, it has been shown to be effective for students to discuss their reading with each other. The study by Pratt and Urbanowski (2015) found that students benefitted from collaborative learning by sharing their knowledge with each other and hearing each other's internal process for reading. Because of this peer mentoring, they more easily adopted these reading strategies in their own reading. For further independent reading monitoring, a teacher may have students practice conferring with one another to deepen the engagement and self-monitoring practice that is so important for reading development.

Conclusion

Elementary grades are a crucial time to promote the development of children's reading skills as well as independent reading habits that can sustain throughout their lives. Independent reading practice is known to support the development of student comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and schema. However, students must take part in structured, meaningful, and monitored independent reading routines in order for this practice to yield results. Students must be guided through every step of the independent reading process. Active reading comprehension strategies must be explicitly taught through a reading program for students to be able to effectively use them on their own. Students must be shown first hand how to choose appropriate reading material that will aid in their development as a reader. Student practice should be continuously monitored and discussed during reading conferences to further promote metacognition of student strategy use.

Chapter III

Context

Community

The location of this research study was a large suburban community in southern New Jersey. The school district included eleven schools in total that range from level Pre-Kindergarten to grade 12. There was one kindergarten building, six elementary schools (K-5), three middle schools (6-8), and one high school (9-12). According to the 2010 Census Bureau review, the township had a total population of close to 50,000 residents (48,559). This is comprised of 17,589 households. This population included an estimated 9,154 school-aged children, 86.8% of which are enrolled in the public schools within the district. The median household income was reported as \$85,892, and 93.6% of the population has obtained an educational level of a high school diploma or higher. The racial makeup of this community was comprised of 87.7% white, 5.8% African American, 0.9% Native American, 3.8% Asian, 3.7% Hispanic or Latino, 0.9% some other race, and 1.7% two or more races. About 3.7% of individuals were reported as living below the poverty level.

School

The study took place at Smithville Elementary (pseudonym), which is one of the six elementary schools in the district. The current school enrollment was 442 students ranging from first to fifth grade. The population is 50% both males and females. Virtually all of the students speak English as their primary language, about 99.5%, with 0.2% speaking Chinese, and 0.2% speaking Spanish. The main reason for this drastic percentage is that the district's English Language Learners program is

housed at only one elementary school in the district in order to provide appropriate services to each of those students. The diversity of the school mimics the percentages of the community as a whole, with 80.5% of students white, 9.3% African American, 4.1% Asian, 4.1% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.0% with a multicultural background. 17% of this school was recognized as students with disabilities. The cause of this high percentage in relation to the district as a whole was on account that this particular school houses the districts self-contained autism program for all students of the elementary level. 22% of this school's students were registered as economically disadvantaged. The faculty to student ratio was 10:1. The length of the typical school day was six hours and twenty minutes, of which five hours and forty minutes are instructional time daily. Faculty attendance was at a rate of 95%. The statewide percentile rank of this school for English Language Arts is 56, meaning that the students outperformed approximately 56% of other schools in the state during standardized testing.

The school's mission was to prepare students with a sound education, as well as address their emotional and physical needs in order to educate the whole child. The staff worked hard and was dedicated to providing students with a solid foundation that would equip them with the tools they need to be successful in secondary education and beyond. The teachers were collaborative and committed to providing a successful academic experience for all students. The teachers, administration, parents, and community leaders worked well together to provide excellent opportunities and experiences to the students. The Parent-Teacher Organization was thriving and sponsored classroom materials as well as multiple

community events throughout the year such as Holiday Parties and Family Candy Bingo. The district was effective in sponsoring frequent and relevant professional development opportunities to its staff. Technology was also considered to be a strength of this school, with the district rolling out new technology supplemented curriculums, a 1:1 laptop to student initiative, and providing a Technology Assistance Coordinator to train and assist teachers and students with using the tools to their fullest potential. The school and district pride themselves on being progressive, and it showed through the curriculum, teacher support, and continuing list of initiatives that are currently in the works.

Classroom

This class is one of four total fourth grade rooms in the school. The school is designed in grade-level pods, with all grade-level classrooms located together for team coordination and collaboration. There were 26 total students in my classroom, with one teacher. However, 10 of the students were enrolled in a pullout reading and writing program called READ 180. These 10 students were not present during ELA class time, so they are not included in this study. The 16 remaining students include 6 girls and 10 boys. This group included one student who has a 504 plan for ADHD and anxiety and one student with an IEP for speech services. The race of this class was primarily white accounting for 13 students, one African American student, and two Hispanic students. The building principal, guidance counselor, and reading specialist assemble the class grouping based on gender and academic ability levels. All of the students present during ELA classes were considered to be working on or above grade level in reading and writing.

For the purpose of this particular study, six students were chosen to follow throughout the duration of the data collection. These six students represent both males and females and are performing on various reading levels. Limiting the number of students to track allows for myself as the researcher to perform deeper and more meaningful analysis of the various data points presented. Student Independent Reading Response Journals and Book Logs will be followed to identify the most and least used active reading strategies. Teacher and student conferences were recorded to analyze student responses about their feelings and thoughts during daily independent reading time. The teacher also recorded observations of behavior during silent reading and responses during active strategy lessons to identify any patterns present in readers who may or may not frequently utilize active reading strategies. Data findings will be presented later in Chapter 4.

The classroom was designed to be a warm and inviting place for students to learn and thrive. The décor was rustic with blackboard accents and burlap bulletin board coverings. There were colorful motivational posters presented around the room as well as curriculum supporting materials on display. The classroom was organized for student collaboration and engagement. There were 5 tables of desk groups where students sit and work together frequently. There were also two small group stations in the room for small group instruction, or flexible grouping space. In addition, there were multiple flexible seating options around the room such as bungee chairs, rocking chairs, and carpet squares. These were provided for students to utilize during independent reading time to promote comfort and concentration. A wide variety of books were provided in the classroom library, which takes up a large corner of the

room, including four large bookcases full of texts for a multitude of levels and interests. The district had just implemented a laptop one-to-one initiative, so each student had his or her own computer to use during the school day. There was also a SMART projector in the classroom that was utilized for both reading and writing instruction. The district provided the curriculums to follow for instruction, and this classroom was chosen to pre-implement the new program that would be rolled out district-wide the following year. Independent reading was supported by an online component, Accelerated Reader. Progress monitoring was conducted throughout the year using both the STAR online reading assessment as well as teacher-administered Columbia Reading Record.

Research Design/ Methodology

This particular study is in the design of qualitative teacher research case study. Shagoury and Power (2012) define teacher research as

Research that is initiated and carried out by teachers in their classrooms and schools... At its best, (it) is a natural extension of good teaching. Teacher research involves collecting and analyzing data as well as presenting it to others in a systematic way. (p. 2)

Teacher research should come naturally out of the specific needs of a classroom and group of students. I also turned to case study methodology to frame this study. Case study methodology closely follows one individual or a select group of individuals to provide an in-depth understanding of how a person experiences a specific phenomenon. In this study, it was helpful for understanding student progression.

The topic of inquiry came naturally for me when designing this research study. I have always felt that independent reading should be an integral part of any reading program. However, I have always struggled to determine the best possible way to monitor students during this practice. Even though strategy usage was focused on during whole class and small group instruction, I found that I really had no way to tell if my students could actually utilize these strategies autonomously. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle, “the unique feature of the questions that prompt practitioners’ inquiry is that they emanate from neither theory nor practice alone but from critical reflection on the intersections of the two” (2009, p. 42). I ultimately felt that I had to further look into my question regarding my students’ independent reading cognition, resulting in this study.

Procedure of Study

This study took place in my fourth-grade classroom during normal ELA instructional time. Beginning of the school-year activities include identifying students’ independent reading levels and leading class discussions on choosing books appropriately and effectively reading during a daily allotted time dedicated to independent reading. Students learn about “Just Right” books and are encouraged to challenge themselves as well as let their interests lead the way when they choose books to read. Qualitative data collection includes daily entries in IDR response journals and book logs, teacher observation notes, and periodical teacher-student conference responses. The setting for this study as well as all data collection occurred during natural instructional practices. Student journals are guided by daily prompts

and are collected and stored securely on district laptops. Conference recordings are gathered on a district supplied I-pad for teacher use only.

Data Sources

I had just begun my fifth year of teaching at the commencement of this study. I had been in the same position as a fourth grade teacher for this entire time. My school district had begun to partially departmentalize courses in fourth grade, allowing me to teach multiple periods of reading for two years. I had also become a member of the school I&RS team as well as grade-level coordinator. I had most recently become a member on the ELA curriculum committee and had a hand in choosing a newly developed curriculum for implementation in the coming school year. All of these opportunities had, in some part, added to my passion for teaching reading, and in turn had lead to this research study. A teacher journal was utilized to record my own personal journey through this inquiry process as well as to note behavioral and instructional observations in class that stood out. This journal has felt like an especially helpful partner in organizing and making sense of the process and results along the way. It has been helpful in evaluating both myself as a teacher-researcher, as well as my students as readers.

Student response journals have produced the highest volume of data in this study. Having the students record their own thoughts and processes of independent reading has proven to be a great lens into their individual mindset and development. Book logs have also been extremely helpful in easily organizing and identifying if there are other factors that arise in independent reading practice such as stamina. Student-teacher reading conferences have also provided another data point to

compare. Students' discussion about their reading is helpful in determining the level of metacognition that is present when it comes to their individual use of active reading strategies during independent daily reading time.

The data collection took place over the course of six weeks, from October 17 to November 30, 2017. The time dedicated to independent reading each day in class was twenty minutes. During this time I observed students and took anecdotal records. These observations included behavior such as on task, talking, moving seats, or taking bathroom breaks. Within the twenty minutes I would also confer with approximately one or two students daily, totaling nearly 60 conferences over the span of the study. For the purposes of data analysis, I decided to complete a case study on six students in particular. As this class was comprised of students only reading at or above grade level, I split my choices between students reading at grade level and those identified as reading above grade level. I also chose two students who have shown signs of reluctance when it comes to independent reading, both in school and at home as per parent reports. Over the course of the study, these six students read a total of 18 books, all of their own choosing. Table 1 shows the variety of text genres and titles chosen by the students.

Table 1

Books Read During Study

Student	Books Read During Study
Haylee	<i>Wish</i> Barbara O'Connor <i>Tenney</i> Kellen Hertz <i>El Deafo</i> Cece Bell <i>Unschooled</i> Allan Woodrow
Chad	<i>Track Team Titans</i> Stephanie True Peters <i>The Ender Eye Prophecy</i> Cara J. Stevens <i>Tapper Twins Run for President</i> Geoff Rodkey
Jeff	<i>Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince</i> J.K. Rowling <i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i> J.K. Rowling
Jackson	<i>Geronimo Stilton and the Cave Mice</i> Elisabetta Dami <i>Geronimo Stilton and the Hunt for the Secret Papyrus</i> Elisabetta Dami <i>Geronimo Stilton and the Golden Statue Plot</i> Elisabetta Dami <i>Legend of Zelda- Ocarina of Time</i> Akira Himekawa
Alexia	<i>Nancy Drew Secret of the Spa</i> Carolyn Keene <i>The Zoey Zone- Geek Chic</i> Margie Palatini <i>Dairy of a Wimpy Kid- Roderick Rules</i> Jeff Kinney
Danielle	<i>The Cupcake Club Recipe for Trouble</i> Carrie Berk <i>Creepover: You Can't Come in Here</i> P.J. Night

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

To explain the findings of this study, I chose six students to more closely monitor and analyze. At the beginning of the data collection process, I was quickly surprised by the immense amount of data that was accrued. I had a class of sixteen reading students, and realized that to more effectively analyze my findings, a smaller amount of participants would be more manageable. Since the framework of my study is a qualitative case study, I compared the multiple data sources and coded for similarities, differences, and emerging themes. This process of analyzing the data allowed me to thoroughly understand what is happening in my classroom during independent reading time. My data was collected through a variety of sources so combining the information across the artifacts was helpful throughout the analysis process. I utilized data from my teacher journal, which includes observational notes and anecdotal records. Daily student reader's response journal entries were collected and read thoroughly. Student book logs were examined. Finally, I listened and transcribed valuable excerpts from recorded reading conferences.

Trends that emerged through reading the multitude of data guided my analysis. This chapter reviews the data as it was coded into four different trends. These include: student engagement during independent reading, progression of strategy usage within data sources, progression of metacognition through the process of active reading, and the value of reader's response journals and reading conferences. These topics aim to answer the original question as stated in chapter one, "How do students use active reading strategies during independent reading time?"

Sub questions included: Do students independently implement active reading strategies when silently reading? Does the use of active reading strategies impact student comprehension and stamina?”

Student Engagement During Independent Reading

One of the themes that quickly emerged was the varying and increasing levels of student engagement. To begin the study, I noted the amount of time individual students spent on task during independent reading time. I also took anecdotal records of bathroom visits, changing reading places, and talking. During this time, students sat around the room in both a location and with a book of their own choosing.

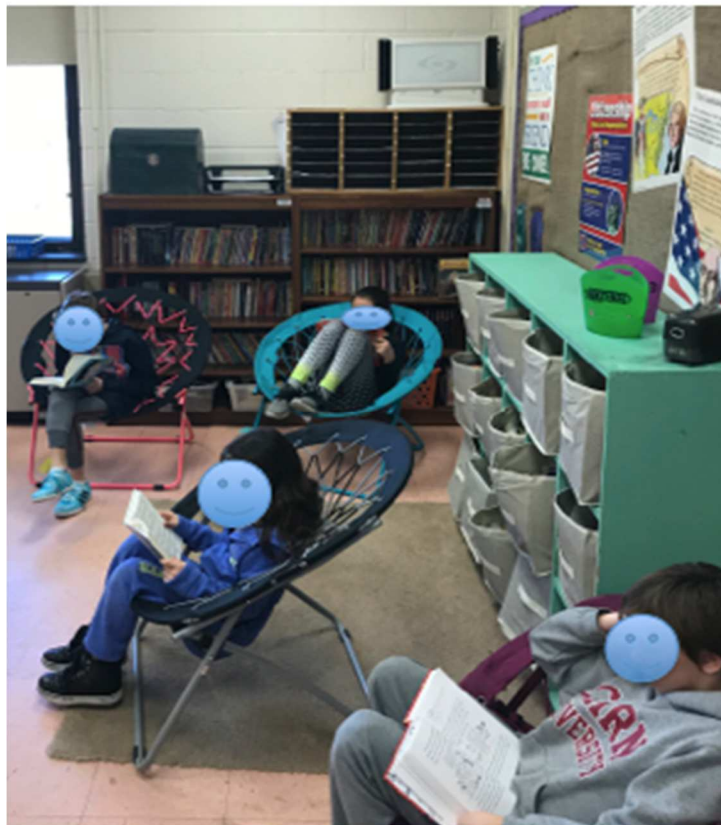


Figure 1. Photo of Students Reading

In one of my first teacher journal notations I recorded that one student, Chad, changed his seat three separate times during the twenty minutes. During the following two days, he spent at least five minutes of IDR time in the bathroom. I brought this up during our next reading conference. “It is sometimes hard to get comfortable with a book and I start thinking about other stuff then, too!” was Chad’s explanation of this during our discussion. I then asked him to brainstorm some ways that he could practice staying on task. His answer: “Um, I could make sure I go to the bathroom before I pick a spot, get a book that I really, really like. Oh! And try to watch the movie in my brain when I am reading!” (Reading Conference, October 17, 2017). The conference that I had with Chad was at the beginning of the reading time that day. There was an immediate change in his attitude during the practice. In his response journal that day, Chad recorded that one thing he did really well was staying on task, while something he can improve upon was visualizing what he read (Reader’s Response Journal, October 17, 2017). This progression continued throughout the study, and during the last week of data collection Chad asked me a question in the final minutes of our daily reading:

Chad: Mrs. Smith. How long do we read each day?

Teacher: About 20 minutes, why?

Chad: And that time is, like, almost over?

Teacher: You have a few minutes left, why do you ask?

Chad: Awwww, because now I can read that whole time and it makes me want to read longer and longer like we talked about.

Teacher: That is great, Chad! I am very proud of you. You can always practice

reading longer when you have extra time and at home, too.

Chad: Oh yea, that's a good idea!

This interaction was recorded in my teacher journal for the day (November 14, 2017), as I felt it really showed the improvement in a student's disposition toward the simple act of reading. There were countless other comments made by students throughout the study that also exhibited this increase in stamina and overall engagement. In one of her response journal entries, another student, Haylee, wrote about her increased engagement. "Things that make me a better reader are reading around the room, reading this with my teacher, and just reading makes me a good reader. I just love reading." (November 17, 2017). Over the duration of data collection, I noticed that students took more notice to their own level of engagement, because they all held a desire to complete the task. They all wanted to be prepared to discuss their reading either during a conference or in their response journals. Through this heightened engagement, more active reading and deeper understanding occurred as well.

Progression of Strategy Usage

When looking over the data, it was clear that there was a progression of strategy usage among all of the students. There was a clear increase in vocalization and explanation of strategy implementation as well as a development in the depth of each student's thought process while reading. To begin the study, I dedicated one reading mini-lesson to each of the six active reading strategies that I would be monitoring my students' responses for: questioning, visualizing, making connections, predicting/ inferring, evaluating, and summarizing.

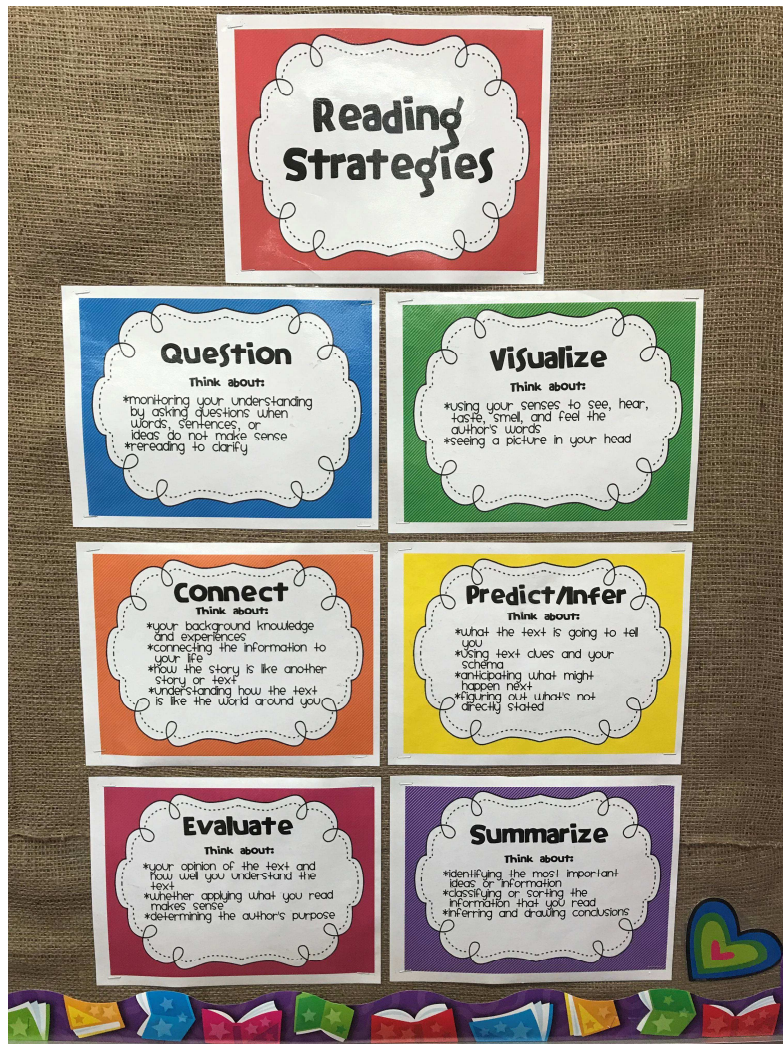


Figure 2. Reading Strategies Posters Utilized During Mini-Lessons

After each mini lesson, the students were directed to practice using each strategy during that day's independent reading time. Once all six strategies were covered, the students were no longer prompted to use any particular strategy, but were simply asked each day for the next two weeks: "Explain your reading today. Did you use any strategies during your independent reading time? If so, explain." During this time, I was able to conclude that many students chose one or two strategies that

they felt safe using and stuck to using those daily. The most frequently utilized strategies during this time period according to the coding of the data were summarizing, visualizing, and asking questions.

For example, throughout the duration of the study, Jeff explained what he visualized in a majority of his response journal entries. On October 30th, his entry on *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* stated, “I visualized Dumbledore and Cornelius Fudge being very angry and arguing with each other.” On November 17th, his entry also focused on a mental image, “Hagrid thinks he is going to be sacked so he asks Ron, Harry, and Hermione to look after Grawp who is his half-brother. I picture Grawp as HUGE!” Once again on November 20th, his entry focused on visualizing, “I visualized all of the characters luring them in and riding on the Thestrals and all the magic of flying around like that.” This series of responses showed me that Jeff felt comfortable using the strategy of visualizing, but left me wondering about his other strategy use. I addressed this during my conferences with him. On November 30th I prompted him to discuss another strategy that he was using while reading:

Teacher: Well, Jeff, tell me what you think about your book so far.

Jeff: I think this book is very, very, very interesting. I am reading the whole series so that is why I picked it anyway.

Teacher: Ok, do you find that you are asking yourself some questions while you read it?

Jeff: Oh, yea. I ask questions like who is the half-blood prince, and who will Harry even take to this big party. I always ask, um, what’s going to happen

next and (pause) it keeps me wanting to read all the time. But then I get in trouble because we move on.

Teacher: That is a good strategy and it seems to be working well if you are staying that excited about it, huh?

Jeff: Oh, yea. I am just going to read all of them.

Overall, my analysis of the data has shown that summarizing, visualizing, and questioning, were all strategies that the six students were most comfortable using, as they showed up most frequently. I was able to find multiple examples of students discussing connections, predictions and inferences, as well as evaluations of the book within the data. I noticed that the depth of the responses increased at the students gained more and more practice. In her response journal, Haylee recorded her empathy for a character. “It must really be hard to live her life. I felt bad for her because on top of living during such a hard time, she doesn’t have many friends to talk to.”

(Response Journal Entry, November 2, 2017). Another student discussed making predictions and inferences without being prompted to during a reading conference:

Teacher: Good Morning, Alexia. Can you tell me a bit about your reading experience today?

Alexia: The book I am reading is really becoming my favorite book now.

Teacher: That is exciting, why is that?

Alexia: Well I am visualizing the places that the main character Josie is going to. (pause) Also, I am just thinking about what she is missing at her gymnastics class while she is away. I am, like, really worried about if she will be ready to perform when she gets back. Like, she is missing days and days

and won't that make her forget? I don't know.... I think... she is going to really mess up at first... but then, like, I think she will do good after that.

Teacher: Geez, it seems like you were really thinking about what you were reading today! I am excited for you to find out what actually happens and for us to talk about it next time we meet, ok?

Alexia: Uh, huh... I will let you know at the end what happens, too!

While these strategies appeared less frequently throughout the collected data, it is possibly because they tend to require a higher level of thinking. While all students were able to successfully practice the task when prompted to do so, they seemed to utilize them less frequently completely independently. This makes me curious if these strategies would become more prominent over time with the progression of each reader's skillset.

Progression of Metacognition

The original aim of this study was to analyze students' strategy usage during independent reading. However, a clear theme that emerged during data analysis is the metacognitive process of reading. As students' strategy usage increased, their metacognition naturally did the same. This was apparent through multiple sources of data and across the six students who were closely monitored. During a reading conference, Jackson discussed his thought process and noted his ability to self-monitor his reading experiences:

Teacher: How is your reading going today?

Jackson: Well, I needed to pick a new book and, well, that was a challenge.

Teacher: How so?

Jackson: Well, I realized that I choose the same books all the time. (Pause) So I pushed myself to try something different.

Teacher: That's great, Jack! I will check in with you again to see how your choice plays out. I am proud that you are willing to stretch your thinking with a new book.

Jackson displayed his progression of metacognitive thought when he wrote in his response journal about this new book as well. One day he wrote, "Today I used my heart to feel how the character must have felt." Another day while reading the same book he recorded, "I really tried to make like a brain movie in my head today while I read. It works a lot, too!"

I found that through conferences, journal entries, and just conversations, I picked up on more and more talk from my students about their thought process. They would tell me things such as, "Wow! My book really made me use my brain power today!"- Haylee or "I was thinking so much about what I read for the rest of the day." – Danielle. One student, Chad, even told me, "I could feel myself connecting to that guy on so many levels," (Teacher anecdotal records). The book he was discussing at the time was an adventure book related to a video game. It was so fascinating to me that this boy has grown so much as a reader in such a short time that he was speaking so deeply about a book and its characters.

Reader's Response Journals and Reading Conferences

One trend that quickly emerged for all six of the students was their interest in both methods of monitoring: conferencing and journaling. I was asked almost daily by students "Is today my day to talk to you about my book?" They said things such

as, “Just wait until you hear what happened!” –Jackson. It was clear that they were even excited to share their growth as readers, “You are going to be so happy for all the strategies I am using!” – Haylee (Teacher Observation Journal- anecdotal records). The students also expressed much excitement over the use of their online response journals. I utilized my district’s one to one laptop initiative to set up journals that could be easily accessed for analysis. I used Microsoft OneNote Class Notebook to create response journals that could be easily monitored and compared. This also allowed me to monitor my students’ reading even when I had to be out of the classroom for meetings or professional development. One particular day, a substitute made the decision to skip that portion of my plans, and the students definitely expressed their concern upon my return. Alexia declaring, “We all told the substitute that we wanted to write in our journals!” and Danielle asking, “Can we just write two journals today, pretty please?” It has been clear that the students have felt a sense of ownership through the practice of systematically writing in their journals daily. They have more enjoyed the entries that have been less prompted and allowed them to write anything they feel is pertinent about their reading. This has allowed me as both the teacher and the researcher to get an insight into the development of their independent reading and strategy usage. One example of an unprompted response journal from Alexia is: “The important event was that Greg broke Rowley’s foot so he can’t perform in the talent show with friend. Now Greg has to perform with the first grader in the talent show. I visualized the story by making an image in my head of what I was reading. I also predicted what was going to happen next because I could tell how sad Rowley is.” (November 15, 2017). Another journal response entry from

Danielle reads, “During IDR I read *Creepover You Can't Come In Here*. In the section I read Emily and her friends Drew and Vicky live across from each other. One night Emily saw a wolf on their porch. She raced to the house but when she got there the wolf was gone. I visualize a bloody wolf on a wooden porch, howling in the moonlight. That’s what I visualized during IDR.” (October 23, 2017). When reviewing the multitude of journal entries, it was clear that over time students responses developed from simple summaries to overviews that included key points as well as strategy usage and thought processes while reading independently.

According to the literature on the topic, student choice is important during independent reading as it helps the students stay motivated and engaged (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). After analyzing the data, I can concur with this idea, as I witnessed students get excited about choosing books, and staying motivated by their interests. By the end of the study it was clear to me that choice is also important when it comes to student monitoring and accountability. While some research advises against the use of school-like activities attached to IDR such as book logs and response journals, other studies find that these tools can help guide conferences and further hold students accountable for their own self-monitoring (Goldberg & Serravallo, 2007). By utilizing online notebooks for my student’s response journals, they were able to utilize tools such as voice recording and picture attachments in order to further demonstrate their thinking and comprehension during daily independent reading time. The data, overall, proved that monitoring and engagement is still an important component of independent reading for elementary school students’ strategy development.

Chapter V

Conclusion

At the onset of this study, I found myself struggling to determine the best way to monitor my students during independent daily reading time. I desired to ensure the progression of strategy development in my students, but was unsure if they were truly carrying the learned active reading strategies into their independent practice. My success with the use of reader's response journals and reading conferences has been contagious for my grade level colleagues. When I explained my process and success, they all expressed interest in trying out similar methods. The district technology integration specialist has held professional development to help them set up online class notebook response journals and they have begun dedicating more class time to individualized student reading conferences.

As a result of my data collection and analysis, I was able to draw conclusions about the implementation of active reading strategies by fourth grade students during independent reading. At the beginning of this study, I observed students with low reading stamina and low engagement struggle to fully participate in daily independent reading time. With the introduction and explicit instruction of active reading strategies, and the support of a monitored IDR time, these factors improved. It was evident that students' stamina was increasing based on the lack of avoidance and excitement vocalized about reading time. Their overall demeanor towards the practice of reading improved drastically. I concluded that as a result of strategy development and the use of journaling and conferring, students reading stamina and interest increased.

I was also able to decidedly conclude that daily independent reading time supports that development of active reading and metacognition. Over the course of data-collection, I saw an increase in the autonomy exhibited by the students in journal responses and conferences. Even with less guidance in the form of writing prompts, the student's responses grew longer and more detailed with each day. I found that through the process of journaling, students would think more about the process of reading and tended to recognize when and how they were self-monitoring throughout our daily independent reading time.

Finally, my data analysis led me to believe that the most successful independent reading model is one that is monitored in some way such as using reader's response journals and participating in teacher-student conferring. In addition to heightened engagement levels, the process of monitoring through journals and conferences is a sense of ownership that students gain for their own reading process. I found that students truly found enjoyment in sharing their individual experiences with a book and about being a growing reader. These monitoring techniques gave me insight as the teacher to evaluate my own instruction and further tailor it to the diverse needs of my many students. It also provided a means of further building a relationship with my students as we discussed the books they were reading. Overall, the process of monitoring the independent reading time through journaling and conferring seemed to be beneficial across the many facets of the study.

Limitations

It is understood that all teacher research will have some limitations. In order to further analyze the development of strategy usage during independent reading time

additional data collection time would be needed. Due to the strict time constraints of a college course, the study was limited to a six-week data collection period. Holding this study during the beginning portion of a school year allowed me to set clear expectations for my students. However, it presented a challenge to implement an additional instructional practice on top of the already jam-packed curriculum schedule. Building in additional mini-lessons as well as time to set up and model reader's response journals for data collection proved difficult. It could also be predicted that more progress in the areas of strategy usage and metacognitive development could be observed over the duration of a full school year. I am now curious if the results of this study could indeed stand up to the test of time. Further questions emerge such as: Will the progress made have a lasting impact on the reading levels of the students involved? Will follow up instruction for each reading strategy increase student understanding and independent implementation further? This leads to great questions for implications of this study.

This study took place in a class of sixteen fourth grade students, all with unique strengths and needs, as well as differing backgrounds and overall reading abilities. Within this class, a small group of six students was chosen to monitor and evaluate more deeply. With such a small sample of participants, it is difficult to make generalized claims and assumptions across grade level, or upper-elementary levels.

Implications

Throughout the course of this study, I found that my inquiry continued to develop in that I asked myself just as many additional questions as I found answers. Other researchers can also conduct their own research on independent reading in the

upper-elementary classroom, as this continues to be a vast area of controversy and research opportunities.

The opportunity to design and carry out such a project has been challenging yet awe-inspiring for me personally. I have felt a deep interest in the subject matter and a strong desire to let the data and findings strengthen my teaching. I feel that this process has led to a development in philosophy to include inquiry as a way to strengthen my teaching practice and remain a life-long learner.

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